

I guess that's what it's like to be young by gaps42

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Summary:

Punk!Jane, literature nerd!Max, new years, 1989.

I guess that's what it's like to be young

Bass pounding beneath the soles of her beat-up sneakers, Max laughs as Will grabs her hands and spins her around, stumbling a bit as the crush of bodies around them writhe as one being.

This is the third or fourth music act of the night, she's not sure which. They all start to blend together after awhile, although she's surprised at how much she's enjoying the music; she'd always kind of associated hard rock with Billy, and although Jonathan and Will had kept in touch mostly by exchanging mix tapes of their favourite new rock songs back and forth through the mail after the older brother had moved to New York, Will knew better than to play it in front of her, so she'd never listened to a lot of it aside from the unavoidable glam rock piping through store speakers in public. It had always sounded angry to her, men bellowing their rage to repetitive chords and crashing drums, but the music at the show Jonathan had brought them to - so underground and undiscovered that they had literally had to walk through an underground tunnel to get to the club - was different, somehow, the thumping bass and electric guitar wailing adding to the lyrics instead of taking away from them, and the soon-to-be literature major in Max was enjoying letting the words wash over her. They were still angry, sure, but they were angry *about* something, their fury focused on a subject or goal rather than directed out at the world at large like a klaxon alarm, and Max made a mental note to look up the new types of rock Jonathan had explained over the screams and chants of the crowd was "More punk and metal than anything, although it's so independent the bands would probably be offended by trying to label them."

Jonathan's insistence on "Real music" had always made her roll her eyes a bit, and it had taken some convincing from Will to get her to come tonight at all. Max loved Jonathan - when Joyce had caught Max trying to sleep in Will's closet so that she wouldn't have to go home, Jonathan's last year of high school, Joyce had dragged an air mattress into Will's room and told her she could stay as long as she wanted, and Jonathan had treated her the same way he treated Will from the next morning onward, which Max, to this day, despite her numerous awards for creative writing, still didn't have the words to

explain what it meant to her – but she'd never connected to music the same way that he had. Will had explained it once as being like her getting lost in books, or Will himself getting lost in drawing: different worlds, but ultimately the same emotional escape from their lives and even their own thoughts. Max had nodded and stopped making fun of Jonathan's pretentiousness but never really wrapped her head around how music could be as immersive and comforting as a whole other world to explore through characters she loved. Even at this concert, surrounded by yelling, stomping kids in terrifying make-up literally throwing their bodies around with the music, she appreciated it but she wasn't sure she fully *got* it, although she's sure she'll get plenty of chances to once she and Will officially move to New York City for college. They had one more semester of high school before they graduated, but Jonathan had been so excited his younger siblings were going to join him and pursue their artistic dreams in the city he loved so much, he'd insisted on bringing them back with him after his visit at Christmas for a few days to give them a preview of the part of NYC you had to be a local to know about. Max was grateful to have two of the small group of people she actually trusted in the world by her side in this vast, intimidating city, and as a rowdy group next to them start shoving and shoulder-checking Jonathan herds the two younger teens towards him like a mother to her ducklings, and Max can't help but smile with only a little bit of exasperation.

The current set ends, and the crowd riots. Max tries her best not to cover her ears; the music is loud enough, but somehow the crowd's noise level between bands seems higher than during the songs. Five shadowy figures climb onto the stage, the stage lights extinguished between sets, and Max watches them idly as Will yells above the roar of the crowd, "Is this show going to be playing at midnight?"

He's asked that question after every set, and Max turns away from the stage to roll her eyes at him. His anxiety over missing the start of the new year gets more relevant after each band, but none of them know anything more about the structure of the show than they did when they first walked in, let alone since the last set. Jonathan raises his wrist to show Will on his watch that they still have a half-hour until midnight, and the dramatic striking of a chord on an electric guitar makes them all turn back to the stage.

Floodlights shine on the main singer, a short but terrifying punk girl with purple hair and dark skin dusted with glitter, as she sings surprisingly sweetly into the mic in front of her and plucks her guitar. Max wonders if she's had professional classic training as her beautiful, confident voice carries through the cheering mob, and then she screeches and riffs impressively on her guitar and the song bursts ear-splittingly into overdrive, Max actually jumping as the rest of the band join in. Each member has their own spotlight, which is one of the four tricks whoever is working the stage lights seems to know, and Max moves to the music as she watches the lead singer shred, feeling her heart speed up. The lyrics are sad, telling the story of a young abused girl Max hopes isn't actually based on the singer's life, but the energy of the music, the juxtaposition of the pain against wild keyboard runs and drums pounding like a heartbeat, makes her hang off of every bar. The band is good, and she swings her hips with the beat, shuffling her feet as much as she can with the crowd pressing around her.

She and Will cheer and clap when the first song is done. The band jumps into the next song without preamble, and the singer quiets as the keyboard crescendos, the complex chords so impressive Max wonders if there's more than one keyboardist. She stands on her tiptoes, but she can only see the shine of the spotlight off of dark gelled hair, and the crowd jostles her so much that Jonathan grabs her shoulders and pulls her back down.

The keyboard and the drums have a duet, and the crowd is stomping to the beat and screaming by the time the guitars join in. Max raises her fist in the air and screams with them, caught up in the dark, intoxicating energy of the music, and when the singer finally joins the instruments the crowd is roaring so loudly Max can't hear the lyrics, but for the first time in her life she feels like she doesn't need to. The song is wild and heady, joining the instruments one-by-one in a medley that is almost sinful in its intimacy, and Max thinks she finally understands what people mean when they say music is *sexy*. Not like the kind of sex Max knows, fumbling and uncertainty and her head begging herself to *just do it already, you're supposed to enjoy this* while her body rebels, but instead it's heat and connection and wanting, the song so real and heavy it has a writhing, tempting body of its own and it makes Max sweat in ways only the deepest,

most humiliating fantasies involving soft, pink lips and dizzyingly curvy hips she'll never admit to having in the light of day do. She shouts nonsensically and jumps in place, unable to contain all of this energy in her body, and she's panting when the song ends on a chord from the keyboard and the crowd explodes.

The lead singer says something into the mic that Max can't hear over the ringing in her ears and the keyboardist stands, ducking her head when the crowd bellows and stomps for her. Will and Jonathan cheer, but Max, so wild and loud a moment ago, can only stare; the girl is slender, her beat-up blazer clearly too big for her, but even with her bowed head she commands such power that Max, even from a distance, shakes with it. Her slicked-back hair is short, curling at the base of her sweaty neck, and when she smirks at the lead singer, one corner of her pink lips quirking up as she tilts her head slightly, Max can still feel the heavy, writhing song pounding through her body. The keyboardist sits back down abruptly, apparently finished with the attention, and Max practically climbs over Will to get another glimpse of her before Jonathan pulls her off.

He says something to her with a smug grin, and even though the band bursts into a new song over his words and she can't hear him, she still blushes.

The next song is very lyric-heavy, but she can barely listen to the words. She tries to get another look at the keyboardist without being so obvious, bobbing to the music and peering over the shoulders of the grinding mob in front of her, but she only catches flashes, the keyboardist's eyebrows furrowed in concentration, the graceful line of her pale neck bracketed with half of the collar of her blazer messily popped, the thin line of concentration her pink lips make as she bangs away at the keyboard. Max is dizzy when the song ends, and her fingers dig into Will's arm as the lead singer throws up her arms for one last scream from the crowd as the band walks off stage.

The lights go down again, and Will wraps his arm around her shoulders and yells something in her ear. She's still shamelessly trying to see the keyboardist through the forest of bodies, but when the mohawk of the drummer disappears through the doors to the back room she seems to be free of the spell, at least enough to turn to her friend and cup her ear to show she hadn't heard him.

"We should see if they have tapes for sale after the show," he yells. "They were good!"

Max nods, blushing to the roots of her flaming hair. He squeezes her and lets go, turning to Jonathan, undoubtedly to ask him yet again what the plan for midnight was, and Max is left shaking in her beat-up sneakers. She's not entirely sure what just happened, but she's certain she wants it to happen again. Everything she's experiencing, the weak, breathless, empty feeling she has pulsing through her, should be a bad thing, but she's drunk on it, reveling in the feeling as it weakens her. She *wants*, and she's so lost in the song's spell the usual guilty feelings don't surface when she thinks of pink lips smirking just slightly, and her knees shake, deliciously, dangerously.

The lights burst to life on the stage and loop around the new band in figure-eights, another of the few tricks the lighting technician knows, and the crowd roars. The lead singer grabs the mic and tilts it backwards, screaming, "How are we all doing tonight?" and the crowd riots in response.

"We're the Dance Hall Crashers, and we're going to bring you into 1989 in a big way! We're going to start our song, *I Want It All*, in time that the line *It has arrived/This moment is here for her* plays at midnight, and I want only the ladies to sing it. You got that, dudes? Shut the fuck up for once, 1989 is ours!"

The crowd laughs and cheers, and a couple of small items like purses and lighters get tossed into the air and bounced around the crowd. The song starts up wildly, floor vibrating with the sound, and Max sways and runs her fingers forcefully through her sweat-matted hair, trying to concentrate.

Like to believe there's something more out there

Like to believe that I'm not the only one

She doesn't realize how dazed she is until she snaps out of it all at once. A few feet in front of her she sees the shine of stagelights on dark gelled hair, and the hot, hungry feeling writhes in her belly all at once.

Which one will be the road that becomes my own?

Should I act or should I take it slow?

The keyboardist is shorter than most of the grinding bodies around them, but Max is laser-focused, following the dark head as she bobs and sways in front of the stage. Max hasn't had any alcohol tonight, but the gleam of the light off the other girl's hair seems to be hypnotizing her, and she forms a very, very bad idea.

Well, I'm anxious and restless

I guess that's what it's like to be young

Before she can think better of it, before she can think at all, Max ducks away from her friends and starts pushing through the crowd, practically swimming through the sea of bodies. She has to shove and elbow a bit, but she makes it with surprisingly little trouble. The movement of the masses pushes her backwards as she tries to fight her way to the musician's side and she throws her body with gritted teeth, propelling herself forward and almost head-butting the keyboardist's shoulder. The other girl looks over in surprise, arms raising instinctually for a fight, and Max feels her humiliating blush through her whole body as makeup-smudged brown eyes meet hers for the first time.

Well, I'm anxious and restless

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Max stands up as tall as she can and holds out her hand, leaning in to shout over the music. "Your set was amazing. I really liked your song especially. I'm Max."

The keyboardist stares at her, then at Max's hand, her face blank. Max's stomach sinks with embarrassment, and she's wishing miserably that she could have been in the same galaxy of coolness as this girl so that she would have thought better of offering a handshake like a dad at a dinner party when the keyboardist grabs her half-lowered wrist, tugging her forward so close their noses almost flatten against each other as she starts moving to the music

again.

“Thank you,” she says, as Max stares into her wide brown eyes and tries to remember which muscles to use to keep herself upright. Her voice is low and husky, and the few words make the heat glow through Max's body as devastatingly as when her whole band had been playing. “I'm Jane.”

Max blinks. “Seriously?” She's never seen anyone who looks less like a *Jane* than this girl, but when Jane frowns and furrows her eyebrows Max wonders if this girl is ever not serious about anything. Her stomach swoops at the intense look on Jane's face, feeling giddy and stupid, and she blurts out, “I mean, cool. Nice. I'm a big fan of your music... Jane.”

Jane's lips quirk up into that smirk again, and she pulls Max close; she turns her body around and locks her arms around the redhead's waist as she dances, not missing a beat as she presses her chest against Max's back. Max's breath shudders, and it is the writhing, longing heat taking over her body, giving rhythm to her swaying hips and arching her back, which loosens her tongue to make her say, “I don't think we're supposed to be doing this?”

She feels that small, amused smirk against her hair, and her eyes close, lips parting. “You're not from around here, are you?” Jane murmurs into her ear, and although she's close enough for Max to hear over the music, Max hopes wildly that Jane somehow doesn't hear her whine as she presses back into the keyboardist, greedy despite her words.

“No,” she says, barely able to scrounge up any embarrassment at her breathy voice. “But I will be, soon.”

Jane nods against her temple, her breath ruffling Max's hair strangely intimate considering their hips rocking together. “We can do whatever we want,” Jane says with quiet confidence, and Max believes her.

Sweet little girl dreamed of the day when

She'd stand up tall and tell the whole world her plan

She gives in, revelling in the freedom of this very private moment in the middle of a crush of strangers. They're dancing, wild and uncoordinated and far too close, moving with how the song makes them feel rather than what would look good, when Jane whips her around again, and Max is so drunk on her that she stumbles and reaches awkwardly for Jane without thinking. The singer on stage is screaming something into the mic, but Max only has eyes for Jane, who is staring at her with determination. The musician meets her eyes resolutely, and Max barely registers the lyrics of the song vibrating around them when Jane pulls her in by her belt loops, holding her gaze. Until she isn't holding her gaze any more.

It has arrived, this moment is here for her

Jane kisses her, and the music disappears.

The taller girl pulls Max against her a little too forcefully, and they stumble backwards a bit, hips colliding as their noses smush together. Their lips meet, Max's a little too open in her shock to fit against Jane's properly at first, but Jane lifts one hand to cradle Max's cheek and opens her mouth, too, and Max discovers where the heady, wet heat she's been feeling since Jane's solo has originated from the whole time. She presses closer, purely instinct now as she winds her arms around Jane's neck, the simple kiss making her feel more than any sexual situation she's put herself in before. Jane sucks her bottom lip and pulls away, luxuriously slowly, and the pounding music and screaming crowd doesn't come back to Max in one huge, staggering rush until she opens her eyes.

Jane is smirking at her, head tilted just slightly as if she's taking her time drinking her in, but her eyes are shy, and her grip on Max's wrists is too tight to just be steadying the other girl from the jostling of the crowd. Max blinks slowly, and then a huge, childish grin spread across her face, unbidden, and Jane's smile grows to match hers as they stare at each other. Jane glances down at their hands coquettishly and turns away, one hand slipping away to poke the woman next to her, who Max sees with a jolt is the lead singer from her band. They discuss something Max can't hear, and now that Jane's hypnotizing eyes aren't on her Max starts to feel her anxiety creep back in over the heady rush the kiss brought, and she wonders if she should pull her arm away before Jane does it for her. Before

she can decide Jane whirls back around, eyebrows scrunched with determination again, and pulls the cap off of what looks like an eyeliner pencil with her teeth. She tugs Max closer again and pushes the sleeve of the redhead's flannel up her arm, and Max is so dazzled by her little pink tongue poking over her lips to wet the tip of the pencil she doesn't look at what Jane writes on her forearm until the taller girl tugs the arm into her line of sight.

"My phone number," Jane says seriously. "Use it. Welcome to New York."

She steps backwards, holding Max's gaze with heat as she lets go of her arm. The crowd goes mad as the song ends, pumping their fists and thrashing around them, and Max reaches for her without thinking when a different hand grabs her other wrist, pulling her in the opposite direction. She turns to see Jonathan, face red and glowing with fury, towering over her as Will hovers behind him, clutching his brother's arm with an apologetic smile.

Oh shit.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Jonathan roars right in her ear, voice piercing even over the chanting of *1989* around them. "I told you we had to stay together! People die in these mosh pits, Max!"

"Did you get hurt?" Will asks kindly from behind him, looking her over with concern. She's hurriedly reassuring him she didn't when Jonathan grabs her other arm, peering down at the scrawling numbers with narrowed eyes.

"Did you ditch us for a boy?" he asks incredulously.

"No," Max says truthfully, but she still feels the twist of guilt as she yanks her other arm away to tug her sleeve down. "I'm fine, Jonathan, don't freak out."

Jonathan's eyebrows shoot up to his fringe. "Don't freak out?" he bellows, and as Will turns him around to calm him down as only he can, Max glances behind her, looking for big brown eyes and a pink, dizzying smirk. She's gone, though, and Max had expected this, even though she has no idea how the other girl could have moved through

the crowd so fast. Somewhere in the back of her mind she wonders if she invented the whole thing, drugged by the heat of the music and her own fantasies, but she touches her lips, swollen and wet with what is not just her own saliva, and she knows it was the realest thing she's ever experienced.

Author's Note:

Jonathan: I've been trying to get you to listen to real music for YEARS and some pretty girl smiles at you and suddenly you're moshing at punk-rock shows???

I don't know, I'm just really weak for nerdy literature major Max holding hands with her scary, badass punk girlfriend and discussing women's influence on literature throughout history? Maybe Max reading her some poem she loves (or wROTE) and Jane writing a song around it? Like??? I was actually 3/4 of the way through another new years fic and then these two took over my brain and. Here you go, I guess.

The song is I Want It All by The Dance Hall Crashers, and I didn't actually know it was from one of their later albums until after I wrote this, so just imagine they wrote it and then it got big later, I guess. Happy New Year to the elmax fandom, I hope everybody who wants a kiss from a pretty girl gets one in 2018!!!